

REPORT

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IMPRESSIONS OF KIM IL SUNG UNIVERSITY

Kim Il Sung University, a coeducational institution, was established on 1 October 1946. The Department of Engineering became Pyongyang Engineering College, the Department of Medicine became Pyongyang Medical College, and the Department of Agriculture became Sariwon Agricultural College, leaving only the Department of Economics and Law, the Department of History and Literature, and the Department of Physics intact within the framework of the university.

At the time the university was established, there were 1,300 students. The 1948 report shows a total enrollment nearing 5,000, but the students of the three independent colleges were included. In other words, the actual number of students in Kim Il Sung University is little more than 800. In the Department of Economics and Law, there are divisions of economics, law, political science, and planned economics (commerce). In the Department of History and Literature, there are divisions of Korean history, world history (history of Soviet Union), philosophy, Korean literature, world literature (literature of Soviet Union), education, and geography. The lack of classrooms and teaching personnel compels the university to divide the student body into forenoon and afternoon groups.

In the Department of History and Literature, all students are members of the Labor Party, but only higher-level Labor Party members are admitted to the philosophy division. In 1948, the philosophy division announced that it was ready to accept 50 new students, but the division received several hundred applications. The majority of applicants were found to be either religious workers or students with no party affiliation. The university authorities selected only 30 students [from the minority group], and the remaining 20 students were selected in secrecy through various county Labor Party organizations.

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It must be noted that individual qualification was not considered in selecting students. For example, a Mr. Moon of the propaganda department of the Ch'olwon County Labor Party was selected to study in the philosophy division despite the fact that he had had a great deal of trouble in graduating from elementary school. Also Ch'oe Ke-moon, a call head of the Mangyang County Labor Party in Kangwon-do, was admitted to the philosophy division without examination.

Among the students in the Department of Economics and Law, Labor Party members constitute about 40 percent of the freshman and more than 60 percent of the sophomore and junior classes. In this department, Marxism, materialism, history of the Soviet Union Communist Party, and Russian language are prescribed courses. Russian language is taught 6 hours each week, and history of the Soviet Union Communist Party is given 3 hours a week. A class in English appears in the school catalogue, but it is not given because an English teacher is not available. A night school, established in 1947 with 500 students, and a communications normal college, established in 1948 with 600 students, have also become a part of Kim Il Sung University.

Teaching Staff

At the time of its establishment, the university had only 60 people on its teaching staff. Later, 13 men and women teachers came from the Soviet Union by plane. They were joined a little later by a number of scholars from South Korea. The university now has 110 teachers. A brief look into the qualifications of the so-called professors in Kim Il Sung University reveals certain facts.

Mu Sun, former chairman of the South Korea Labor Party, is president of the university. Vice-president is T'ae Song-su, who is a little over 30 years of age and a Soviet citizen-soldier. After the liberation of Korea, he came to Korea and served as vice-chairman of Wonsan County People's Committee, and later became chief editor of the Inmin Ilbo. He was promoted to the position of editor-in-chief of the Nodong Sinmun, an official organ of the North Korea Labor Party, and finally he was made vice-president of Kim Il Sung University. T'ae grew up in the Soviet Union. Upon his completion of normal school, he taught 8 years in one of the Soviet elementary schools. He gained Kim Il Sung's confidence when he wrote a pamphlet on education while he was chief editor of the Nodong Sinmun.

The Department of Economics and Law is headed by Kim Kwangjin, who with Pak Si-hyong and Kim Sok-yong came from the South. Obviously, these men do not possess adequate knowledge in their academic field, for the students call them "kicked-out teachers." Some of the professors at Kim Il Sung University are in their early 20's, and a good many others were elementary-school teachers during the days of Japanese administration.

University Facilities

The building in which the university is housed was completed in October 1948 at a cost of 120 million won. The money came from the sale of so-called "Patriotic Rice" collected from the farmers by force. The steel and concrete structure contains more than 12,000 meters of floor space. The university has its own press for printing textbooks and a weekly university paper. As a means of training more professors for the university, an Esperanto school with a teaching staff of 30 members is maintained.

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Student Morale

The university prescribes that the undergraduate course shall be 4 years and the graduate course 3 years. New students are accepted every year, in addition to freshmen, to fill vacancies in sophomore and junior classes. Academic requirements for admission to the university are graduation from elementary grades and an age of 20 or older. However, each application must be accompanied by a recommendation from the Labor Party. As for weekly student events, there are Minch'aekhoe (self-disciplinary session) once a week, Tokbohoe (reading and report session), and Pip'anhoe (seminar) three times a week, Soviet military drill six times a week, cultural circle and picnic activities once a week, oratorical contest twice a month, working on bulletin boards once a week, and propaganda reports conference three times a week. Thus, the students' time is taken up with all kinds of nonacademic activities.

Non-Communist students who are admitted to Kim Il Sung University stay as students in the university out of their desire to learn, but they are not happy in having to wear the so-called Lenin cap as a part of university uniform, and they can attend classes only 2 or 3 hours a day. In addition, they are forced to pay respect to the pictures of Stalin and Kim Il Sung that are hung in every classroom and hallway in the university building. These students are utterly discouraged and, as a result, they indulge in wine and women day and night. According to reliable reports, about two or three students of this group go insane every semester.

North Korea claims that most of the students at Kim Il Sung University are studying comfortably under the People's Scholarship system. Nevertheless, the cold fact is that students from Kim Il Sung University are found begging for money in hotels, on the street, on public conveyances, and in all kinds of places.

As indicated, there is a graduate division in Kim Il Sung University, but there are no competent professors to conduct the graduate work adequately. Therefore, the so-called graduate division procures copies of every translation of Russian language from the Korean-Soviet Cultural Association and studies them. That is the main academic function of the graduate division in Kim Il Sung University.

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